

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

I chose to volunteer at Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (“CLSEPA”) because I wanted to get immigration removal defense experience. CLSEPA is one of the few non-profit legal aid organizations in the Bay Area that handle removal defense cases for low-income clients. Most of all of the clients here at CLSEPA are in removal proceedings, and we are helping them not get deported through one of several defenses. CLSEPA has other departments besides immigration, but this summer I worked solely in the immigration department. The majority of our clients are Latinos, and thus it has been imperative that the volunteers here be able to communicate in Spanish.

There are four immigration attorneys in CLSEPA’s immigration department. Each attorney specialized in a specific type of immigration caseload. One attorney specialized in *Franco* cases. *Franco v. Holder* was a class action lawsuit on behalf of hundreds of immigration detainees in California, Arizona, and Washington, whom suffered from severe mental disabilities and were without legal representation in their immigration hearings. The ACLU won the case and established the right to legal representation for persons with severe mental disabilities. Another attorney here specialized in U visa and VAWA cases, which is a pathway to legal residency in the United States for immigrants that were victims of a serious crime while in the United States. The third attorney specialized in Special Immigrant Juvenile Status cases, which is the main form of relief for the thousands of unaccompanied minors entering the United States without their parents. The fourth attorney specialized in Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival cases, which is a discretionary promise not to deport young adults who have gone to school in the United States.

I mainly worked under the supervision of the attorney that specialized in U visa cases and also did some work for the attorney that specialized in *Franco* cases. My day to day job while working here has been helping the attorneys draft motions to the San Francisco Immigration Court, drafting letters to police departments, researching immigration case law, conducting client interviews, and filling out immigration applications. Aside from the office work, I have also participated in CLSEPA’s many evening clinics, where immigrants can come and seek legal advice and perhaps receive legal representation if we can refer their case to a pro bono attorney.

My summer grant has helped me very much during this past summer since I was not being paid to work at CLSEPA. CLSEPA serves low-income clients and cannot afford to pay the many volunteers that give their time. Thus, this grant has allowed me to help immigrants with the gravest of immigration consequences, deportation. From the stories that I have heard while working here, I have realized that a deportation order can be incidentally a death sentence, since many of these people are escaping the drug cartels and gangs that are threatening them in their home country.

While working at CLSEPA, I mostly worked with U visa victims. As a U visa applicant, the immigrant must have been a victim to a violent crime that occurred in the United States. Since most of our clients come from East Palo Alto, California, it seems like a high majority of the city’s population has experienced some sort of violent crime. Many of the victims that come to our office have been victims to armed robberies. Our own law office was broken into twice in the short time

span that I spent volunteering with CLSEPA. From the clients, I have heard stories of drive-by shootings of a client's house, groups of young men attacking families on the streets and robbing them, stabbings, kidnappings, and domestic violence.

One of the most serious cases that I worked on involved a client who was being brought into the United States by 'coyotes,' a name given to those persons that guide immigrants across the United States border unlawfully. What this client did not know is that these 'coyotes' worked for an infamous drug cartel that later kidnapped him and 200 other persons. He eventually escaped through the garage and helped the FBI locate this house. The FBI raided the home and freed all the immigrants, which included pregnant women and young children. Our client also served as a material witness against the members of the cartel. However, as a result, the cartel made it known to our client's family that they will kill him if he returns to his home country in Central America. Even after serving as a witness for the FBI, which put his life in danger, our client was put in jail for four months in the United States, and then put in deportation proceedings to be returned to the country that he was certainly going to be killed in. I worked on this client's case by preparing the client's asylum application and conducting an interview in order to write down his story to present it to the immigration judge for his court date. This client was only a year younger than me, and so it was sad to hear all the struggles that this young man had to deal with so far in his life. All he wanted was to stay in the United States to have a normal life. His home country could not offer him that. Everyday that I left the office, I felt grateful for where I am and what I will be. It's hard not to feel grateful after hearing such heart wrenching stories day after day.

Working in East Palo Alto has shown me a different side to the Silicon Valley. Many of the residents of this community are of African-American and Latino descent. Hearing these clients' stories has allowed me to reflect on my own life and my many blessings. To be born in the United States alone is a great blessing. Many of our clients will risk walking in the desert for many days just to seek a decent job or escape persecution from gangs and/or drug cartels. Regardless of what law I may choose to do in the future, I will always carry these stories with me and remember that I can always make time to take on pro bono cases.

Joseph Navé
Santa Clara University School of Law
February 2014



COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES IN
EAST PALO ALTO

August 22, 2014

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Dear Dan Ruben,

It is with great pleasure that I write in regards to Joseph Nave's time with the Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto ("CLSEPA"). As Joseph's direct supervisor, I can attest to Joseph's dedication to immigrants' rights.

Joseph was eager to learn and always willing to take on any task that was needed to better serve our clients. Joseph worked closely with two clients and prepared these clients' applications for U nonimmigrant status. He assisted the clients' in drafting their declaration, completing the necessary forms, and compiling the necessary supporting documentation. Joseph also worked with a client in preparing his application for asylum. Joseph was diligent and caring in his client interactions.

Joseph displayed growth in his legal research and writing. He drafted numerous procedural-based motions for immigration court. He also assisted in drafting a motion to terminate which involved very complex analysis of the intersection between immigration and criminal law. Joseph displayed wonderful enthusiasm. He welcomed feedback and would ask questions as he was completing a task. He was very productive, and greatly increased our capacity to serve our community.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (650) 391-0343 if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Best,

Kaitlin Kalna Darwal
Senior Attorney, Immigration Program